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 Letter

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The Movies

BY GENE SISKEL



'Kremlin Letter'

● IN NOEL BEHN'S NOVEL, "The Kremlin Letter," a team of American agents is after a letter which, if it fell into the wrong hands, could upset the balance of power in the world. As a film, Behn's novel has apparently fallen into the wrong hands because John Huston's direction destroys the delicate balance between story line and trivial detail.

For more than an hour Huston parades character after character, choosing to have an agent spout the biography of another spy rather than start the mission.

Once the goal of getting the letter is established, one cannot tolerate a slow-paced film which does not move toward that goal.

Huston employs too large a cast. At first we think the film will be about Patrick O'Neal's battle against the spy system. O'Neal is reluctantly pulled from the navy to do a job for the CIA. We watch his training under the tutelage of Richard Boone, an old fashioned, folksy agent. Boone's is the best performance among a general adequate cast.

But then Huston brings on the masses and drives home the point that altho a spy can make good money, it's a boring business.

Also corralled for the trip to Russia are agents George Sanders, a transvestite who prefers knitting to murder, and Barbara Parkins, who can crack a safe with her toes. The Russians wear suits which are three sizes too big.

Huston chooses to get contemporary with his punishments. A Russian agent is threatened that his daughter will be turned into a lesbian by a Negro girl unless he talks.

After an hour and a half of preliminaries, we really couldn't care if anyone finds the letter, if the letter exists, or if the balance of power is upset.

TRIBUNE MINI REVIEW Return to Sender

★ "THE KREMLIN LETTER"

Produced by Carter De Haven and Sam Wiesenhal, directed by John Huston, screenplay by Gladys Hill and Huston, a 20th Century-Fox release at neighborhood theaters. Rated "GP" (all ages admitted; parental guidance suggested).

THE CAST

Erika	Bibi Andersson
Ward	Richard Boone
Janis	Nigel Greene
Highwayman	Dean Jagger
Sophie	Lila Kedrova
Rene	Patrick O'Neal
B. A.	Barbara Parkins
Warlock	George Sanders
Puppet Maker	Raf Vallone
Koslov	Max Von Sydow
Bresnavitch	Orson Welles



Barbara Parkins in "The Kremlin Letter."